



North Carolina Division of Parks and Recreation
www.ncsparks.net for State Parks Info and Events

Michael F. Easley
Governor

April 2006

Volume 20 Number 2

William G. Ross Jr.
Secretary, DENR

STATE ADJUSTS RANGER SALARIES

With departmental and General Assembly support, Lewis Ledford, division director, announced on March 27 that funding has been provided to implement the recommendations of a 2004 study to raise salaries of all rangers and park superintendents in the state parks system by an average 6.95 percent. Salary grades for those commissioned law enforcement officers will also be adjusted.

In a related move, funding was provided to improve salaries of maintenance personnel, with increases to range from 3.2 to 9.7 percent.

The salary adjustment will alleviate an inequity in pay that has existed since at least 1988,

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REUTER REJOINS PARKS SYSTEM

Don Reuter, who started his state government career with the Division of Parks and Recreation in 1987, returned to the agency Feb. 1 as assistant director for planning and administration.

In this new position, Reuter directs planning, land protection, personnel, budget, communications and information technology programs for the state parks system.

Prior to rejoining the division, Reuter was director of the Office of Public Affairs for the Department of Environment and Natural Resources (DENR) from 1997 to 2006. The office coordinates the agency's communications

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FUNDS SET ASIDE FOR NEW PARK UNITS



State Sen. Walter H. Dalton, right, and his wife, Lucille, talk with Jonathan Howes, second from left, chairman of the Parks and Recreation Authority, and Susie Hamrick Jones, left, of The Foothills Conservancy.

The N.C. Parks and Recreation Authority in March set aside \$3.8 million from the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund for land acquisition at the new Hickory Nut Gorge State Park and \$1.2 million to protect additional property at Elk Knob State Natural Area.

The allocation for Hickory Nut Gorge was met with elation by State Sen. Walter H. Dalton of Rutherford County, who attended the session at Lake Lure and addressed the authority.

A new state park in the county will offer a much-needed economic boost as well as conservation in one of the most naturally significant areas of the state, Dalton said. Rutherford County has been hard hit by a decline in the textile industry, said the senator, who was instrumental in

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Department of Environment and Natural Resources

From The Director's Desk

Every organization is bound to evolve over time. The mark of an effective organization is to evolve with foresight and planning and with an eye toward re-positioning the organization in relation to the changing times. It's with this in mind that we announced several weeks ago a reorganization of our division administration. It's a reflection of the growth of the division, the change in personnel due largely to retirements and also the increasing complexity of our work.

The state parks system has gone for many years without a deputy or assistant director, a rarity in the department and even within state government. As noted elsewhere in this edition of *The Steward*, Don Reuter, formerly the director of public affairs for DENR, has rejoined the division as assistant director for planning and administration. The reorganization sets out his supervisory responsibilities for human resource management, information technology, budgeting, communications, natural resources and regional planning and land protection programs.

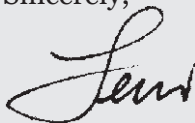
It's a broad set of responsibilities, but a natural one when set against the other major division sections as now set out – parks operations with Susan Tillotson as chief; design and development under the direction of Bruce Garner; and NCSU's Recreation Resource Services under the guidance of Dr. Phil Rea.

The return to a design and development section is logical given the need for our construction and parks planning programs to work so closely together as many new facilities and new parks are coming on line. In recent years, the construction program has been steering more than 40 capital projects through design or construction phases at any given time. In the past five years, the parks system has grown by more than 22,000 acres. And, maintaining up-to-date master plans and general management plans for all our parks is a more complex job. All of this demands a more integrated planning system – for construction, for land-use planning and for a holistic approach to creating new state parks and developing new sections of existing parks. It also positions us to take a more aggressive lead in planning and building environmentally sustainable facilities.

Some of the reorganization also stems from a need to redistribute workloads. Byproducts are likely to be new emphasis on our natural resource protection and research programs and new emphasis on maintaining strong staff support for the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund.

The overall intent is to re-energize, build on our recent successes and position the division as a stronger, more effective and more efficient organization.

Sincerely,



Lewis Ledford

UP CLOSE AND 'PERSONNEL'

JoAnne Barbour is the new administrative officer in charge of procurement for the budget office in administration. She has more than 14 years experience, including 13 years as a purchasing agent with the Department of Environment and Natural Resources. She is a graduate of Wake Technical College.

Jerry Lequire is the new Park Ranger II at Petti-grew State Park. A veteran of the U.S. Air Force, he graduated from the University of North Carolina at Charlotte with a bachelor's degree in microbiology and biochemistry. He formerly worked for a chemical manufacturer in Maine.

Anthony Ammirati has joined the staff of Goose Creek State Park as a Park Ranger I. Ammirati earned bachelor's and master's degrees in recreation and leisure studies from East Carolina University. While in college, he worked for the Greenville Recreation and Parks Department.

Timothy Bash has joined the staff at Jordan Lake State Recreation Area as a Facility Maintenance Supervisor. He has more than 24 years of related experience, and worked for the past four years for the Department of Corrections in Raleigh. He is a U.S. Navy veteran.

Lloyd Rasmussen is a new Maintenance Mechanic I at Carolina Beach State Park. He is a former employee of the North Carolina Aquarium at Fort Fisher and attended Suffolk County Community College in Brentwood, N.J. He has more than eight years of related experience.

MST MID-STATE ROUTE FORMING

The shortest route from point A to point B is a straight line, but that isn't always the best route.

That appeared to be a consensus opinion of a roomful of planners and dreamers who gathered in Hillsborough in February to begin mapping a potential new corridor for the central piedmont segment of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail.

The best route, observed Allen De Hart, the trail's most ardent supporter over the past 30 years, "is likely to look like a snake crawling across the state rather than an interstate."

The piedmont segment has always been a vague dotted line marching somewhat north of the Interstate 40 corridor. That was a "placeholder" while government and private supporters concentrated on western and eastern segments, said Paul Kron, of the Piedmont Triad Council of

Governments, who moderated the planning session.

During the session, the favored corridor slipped considerably to the south – dipping to follow the Haw River through much of Alamance County before turning northeast along Cane Creek and back toward Hillsborough and the Eno River.

And, gradually the corridor morphed into a series of alternate routes and loops that would take advantage of scenery, amenities, points of interest and publicly held land. A huge, taped-together map of the nine-county region soon was embroidered with dotted lines representing potential trails and uses.

Darrell McBane, chief of the state's trails program, said that's a good thing. "This whole

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REUTER

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and outreach efforts through media relations, publications production, special events and public information programs and initiatives.

"Don brings with him not only impressive administrative skills and experience, but a genuine love for the state parks system and an appreciation of its mission," said Lewis Ledford, director of the division. "Our division is among a very few in state government that has operated without an assistant director for many years. Adding this position will allow us to be a much more effective and efficient organization as we prepare for challenges ahead."

A native of Syosset, N.Y., Reuter has a bachelor's degree in communications from Hofstra University in Hempstead, N.Y. and a master's degree in public administration from N.C. State University.

He was public information officer for the state parks system from 1987 until 1993 before moving to the Division of Environmental Management (later re-named the Division of Water Quality), where he served until 1996. He became the director of public affairs in the Department of Revenue in 1996 before returning to DENR in 1997.



Prior to joining state government, Don was a reporter with the Greenville (N.C.) Daily Reflector and The Associated Press in Raleigh. He was also an assistant editor with Testa Communications, a Long Island, N.Y. publishing company, prior to moving to North Carolina/

"With four new parks on the horizon and the New Parks for a New Century initiative moving ahead, these are exciting times for the state parks system," Reuter said. "I feel privileged to have the opportunity to return to the division to support these and other important efforts."

"My years serving as public information officer were among the most gratifying of my professional career. When I left the division in 1993, I told then-director Phil McKnelly that future years would be good to the North Carolina state parks system. And they have been. Shortly after I left, voters overwhelmingly passed a \$35 million bond referendum for state parks, and lawmakers showed great wisdom and foresight by creating the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund."

Reuter is also a past president of the N.C. Association of Government Information Officers. He, his wife, Karen, and their daughter, Anna, reside in Raleigh.

TRUST FUNDS HOLD JOINT MEETING

It was an intense, 24-hour think tank and the topic of the day was how best to spend nearly \$140 million each year for conservation of North Carolina's natural resources.

"We want to make sure we're on the same page," said Bob Gordon, chairman of the Natural Heritage Trust Fund.

Gordon was opening the first formal joint meeting of trustees of the Natural Heritage Trust Fund and the Clean Water Management Trust Fund and members of the Parks and Recreation Authority, which oversees the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund. The gathering was March 2-3 at a hotel in north Raleigh.

Gordon reminded the group that nearly 400 acres in the state are developed each day. As a counter-balance, the three trust funds that bankroll land conservation in the state must work together effectively and efficiently, he said.

The Natural Heritage Trust Fund and Parks and Recreation Trust Fund are primarily supported by the state's tax on real estate sales. This year, Natural Heritage is expected to allocate about \$20 million for land conservation – based largely on protection of species and habitat. The Parks and Recreation Trust Fund will likely generate at least \$17 million for parkland and state natural areas. The Clean Water Management Trust Fund was allocated \$100 million by the General Assembly for projects that protect water quality.

Grants from two or even all three of the trust funds are often used in tandem for important conservation projects. An example is the current effort to build a new state park at Hickory Nut Gorge, an area of rare habitats that is under development pressure.

"I have a sense of gladness and pride at the work you do," Bill Ross, secretary of the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, told the joint session, "It's a good time to celebrate our successes...and also to size up our challenges and tune our strategy."

Ross said it's important to make land conservation a mainstream idea in North Carolina and to consider the work of the trust funds as creating a "natural ecosystems network" for its people.

The challenge could be put into an equation," he said. "Can an effective working relationship, plus a good map, equal optimum performance of our conservation efforts?"



Wendell Begley, a member of the Parks and Recreation Authority, speaks to the group during a brainstorming session.

The trustees were briefed in detail on conservation planning efforts by state agencies, including the *New Parks for a New Century* initiative of the state parks system. Lewis Ledford, director of the division, said that although four new state parks and three new state natural areas have been established in the past few years with the help of all three trust funds, the parks system has identified more than \$630 million in needs and opportunities for existing parks and a long list of potential sites for park units.

Dick Hamilton of the Wildlife Resources Commission described the state's aggressive Wildlife Action Plan; Richard Rogers updated the message of One North Carolina Naturally; and, Jimmy Johnson discussed the newly-minted Coastal Habitat Protection Plan.

In discussing plans of the state's Natural Heritage Program, Executive Director Linda Pearsall said, "The threats don't always come from those things you can see. They can also come from not thinking smart about how we spend conservation dollars."

Non-profit conservation initiatives were also presented by Reid Wilson of the Conservation Trust for North Carolina, Kate Dixon of the Land for Tomorrow Coalition and Fred Annand of The Nature Conservancy.

After listening to the litany of conservation efforts, Jonathan Howes, chairman of the Parks and Recreation Authority, said, "There are

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SALARIES

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when law enforcement certification began to be required for rangers and superintendents. The change will also make it easier for the division to recruit and retain entry-level rangers. Salaries at that level were adjusted by 13.5 percent.

The new entry salary for a park ranger is \$28,172 upon completion of 16-week Basic Law Enforcement Training and being commissioned as a special peace officer. The increase raises the overall average salary of the Park Ranger I class to \$30,983.

Ledford said the salary adjustments were a long time coming and were the result of hard work by division personnel over a period of almost two decades.

“For the better part of our 90-year history, state park superintendents and rangers have been under-compensated on several fronts when compared to professionals working elsewhere in state government. That problem was exacerbated after we formally entered into the law enforcement field in the late 1980s,” he said.

The disparity prompted the General Assembly to order a study by the Office of State Personnel in 2004. The study found that rangers in North Carolina were being paid 10-14 percent less than their counterparts in other states when performing the broad duties required.

The study noted that it is difficult to compare the job of park rangers and superintendents with other law enforcement jobs such as police officers and deputies, or even those elsewhere within the Department of Environment and Natural Resources, such as marine fisheries and wildlife enforcement officers.

The OSP also went outside North Carolina, notably to state park systems in Maryland and Missouri, where ranger duties and requirements

are somewhat similar.

Ranger candidates are required to have at least a two-year degree, normally in a non-law enforcement curriculum, such as park management, natural resource management or biology. Superintendents must have a four-year degree.

Beyond law enforcement duties, North Carolina rangers are responsible for natural resource management, environmental education and visitor services, a multi-specialist role that requires certification in fire suppression, medical first response, search and rescue and interpretive skills.

Many states and, in most cases, the National Park Service, divide rangers into at least two specialties – those responsible for law enforcement and those with interpretive and/or natural resource duties.

The salary adjustments come at a total cost of \$584,384 and are effective as of Feb. 1. The OSP will also collapse the three current park ranger classifications into two and will consolidate the four superintendent classifications. The salary grade of Park Ranger I will advance by four grades (from 60 to 64) and that of Park Ranger II will advance by two grades (from 64 to 66).

Ledford noted that equity increases were funded in 1997, but that pay grades were not adjusted. “For just that moment in time, it was equitable,” he said. Similarly in 2004, rangers and superintendents received a 10 percent across-the-board increase.

“We have not made this long, hard journey alone,” he said. “We have been the beneficiaries of supportive leadership at both the division and department levels and have had the advocacy of our friends and constituent support groups. We have also had the strong support of the leadership and mem-

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TRUST FUNDS

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some fantastic opportunities for partnerships, not only among the trust funds but among the public and private groups we’re working with.”

The joint session raised some discussion items for each of the trust funds to tackle at their respective board meetings, Howes said.

One of the gaps identified was the lack of an effective state program to conserve family farms and private forests. Steve Troxler, the state’s commissioner of agriculture, told the group that North Carolina is behind other states in that regard.

“The ones that are doing the most about farmland preservation are the ones that have already lost farms,” he said.

Alan Briggs of the Natural Heritage Trust Fund suggested another priority should be “to expand the community that’s concerned about conservation,” and that involves reaching out to the business and development community.

Ron Kincaid of the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund said, “We need to determine if there are partner groups we can work with to defuse conflict before it happens.”

DAM REMOVAL TO IMPROVE ENO HABITAT

A 21.8-acre impoundment at the Pleasant Green Road Dam in Eno River State Park was drained in March in preparation for the dam's removal later this year.

The dam removal project will restore free-flowing characteristics to a 1.5-mile reach of the Eno River, improving habitat for both common and threatened species of fish, mussels and other aquatic wildlife. The project is a cooperative effort of the state parks system, the N.C. Division of Water Resources and the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service.

In early March, a contractor began removing some of the silt that had collected behind the 91-year-old concrete dam. And, rotted wooden boards in a pair of weir gates were gradually removed to drop the water level by degrees.

A trackhoe used for the initial work also turned up traffic signs, newspaper racks and an outboard motor that had found their way into the long, narrow pond.

The Division of Parks and Recreation began considering the dam removal project in 1997.

A 2001 study of the dam, which is 122-feet long and 12 feet high, determined that its failure is likely. The weir gates were inoperable, and there was evidence of seepage and structural weaknesses that posed safety and liability issues for the state park.

"Removing the dam is the wisest option in terms of protecting the river's wildlife resources, and it's also the most cost effective," said Brian Strong, head of the natural resources program for the



Trackhoe is used to remove boards from dam's weir gates.

state parks system. "Gradually draining the impoundment this spring will allow much of the area to regenerate naturally during the summer growing season and will allow our staff to monitor for potential erosion problems before the dam is removed."

The dam was built in 1915 by Duke Power Co. to provide cooling water for a steam generation plant. The plant was dismantled in 1958.

The Pleasant Green dam was among more than 30 built on the river since the 1800s, and most of them were used to power mills, said Dave Cook, the park superintendent. A 1908 flood destroyed many of them, and soon, only four will remain standing.

The cost of dam removal, restoration of the river's banks and restoration of wetlands at the intake area of the former steam plant is estimated at between \$92,000 and \$229,000. Estimates for replacing or repairing the dam ranged from five to ten times as much.

A detailed environmental assessment of the project concluded that removing the dam will expand the local habi-

tat of rare fish species such as the Carolina darter and Roanoke bass as well as endangered mussels, including the Atlantic pigtoe mussel and yellow lampmussel, that are vital in protecting water quality. The mussels depend on the migration of fish to carry their larvae.

The assessment also noted that dam failure could have suddenly released sediment trapped behind the dam, and the resulting plume would have threatened wildlife downstream.

The second phase of the project is expected to begin in the fall and will include actual demolition of the dam by mechanical means. The second phase will also include restoration of up to 1,600 feet of the river's banks upstream of the dam.

Portions of the impoundment's banks, including some on property of homeowners at the northern reaches of the impoundment, will be restored to a natural slope and will be planted with native trees and shrubs. The remaining sediment immediately behind the dam will either be stabilized or removed.

RARE PLANTS FIND HOME AT THE ROCK

Hanging Rock State Park played a pivotal role in a multi-agency rescue of a population of the rare and federally endangered Schweinitz's sunflowers.

The state park's staff and the division's natural resource management staff in March found a permanent home for most of the plants in a secluded section of the park in Stokes County.

In October, N.C. Department of Transportation (DOT) workers discovered the plants growing along a secondary road in Stokes County that was scheduled to be paved. The DOT immediately contacted the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service, the federal agency that coordinates the recovery of federally protected species, the state park, the Natural Resources Conservation Service and Environmental Defense, a non-profit agency which has an ongoing project to protect the sunflowers.

"When we realized this endangered sunflower was in the work area, we wanted to take a step back and make sure we did the right thing," said Diane Hampton, DOT's environmental officer. "We contacted the natural resource agencies and started working on a solution that would be in the long-term interests of the plant, and I think we've succeeded at that."

State and federal employees and volunteers spent a day in October digging up 570 of the plants, which were then stored at a DOT facility. In March, a similar team replanted them.

Marshall Ellis, a division natural resource manager, and Erik Nygard, superintendent of Hanging Rock State Park,

found suitable sites that take into account the plant's intolerance of heavy shade, and 540 of the plants were placed in two locations. Private landowners Joe and Ben Lackey agreed to plant the remaining 30 plants on their property.

"Hanging Rock was thrilled that we could help with the recovery of this plant," said Nygard. "Having Schweinitz's sunflower here adds to the park's biological richness, and helps us advance our role as guardians of the state's natural heritage."



Biologists and volunteers remove Schweinitz's sunflower plants from a road right-of-way in October.

While removing endangered plants from a site is generally considered a conservation measure of last resort, this project offered the opportunity to establish a population of the sunflowers on protected land, a step that could help lead to the eventual recovery of the species.



Schweinitz's sunflower.

Schweinitz's sunflower was listed as federally endangered in 1991. In order for the plant to be considered for removal from the endangered species list, there needs to be 15 distinct and protected populations, all of which need to be stable or increasing for a period of at least 10 years. And, ten populations must be in permanent conservation ownership.

"For the recovery of this plant, we want to have several healthy, protected populations," said Carolyn Wells, a botanist

with the U.S. Fish and Wildlife Service. "However, a lot of the sites where the plant is found are along road rights-of-way where they remain vulnerable. If we can get those plants into situations where they'll receive long-term protection, we're looking at a conservation gain."

Ken Bridle with Environmental Defense said the project reflected an incredible level of teamwork.

"If we want to see this plant not only protected, but fully recovered, we need to have individuals, government and the private sector working together. We had that here, and it made the project a success."

Michelle Laveris, left foreground, joins experts at her first butterfly count. Behind her is Bob Perkins, a member of the Carolina Butterfly Society.



STILL FREE

COUNTING BUTTERFLIES RITE OF SPRING

It raised some eyebrows in the state park, this knot of people peering with binoculars at a patch of gravel.

But on a tiny wildflower among the stones, tiny wings fluttered.

"That's a nice, fresh male duskywing there. That makes three species and we haven't even left the parking lot," said Raven Rock State Park Superintendent Paul Hart.

With a quickly warming sun and more wildflowers coming to bloom, it was going to be a

good day for the 10th annual butterfly count at the park in Harnett County. By lunchtime, the group of five volunteers led by Hart had spotted dozens of butterfly species.

The group spent about three hours visiting a scattering of favorite spots in the 4,677-acre park where butterflies were known to greet the spring air, to "nectar" among wildflowers and take in moisture. The volunteers hiked about the park nearly as quickly as their prey, their eyes darting along the trailsides watching for any telltale flutter or flash of color.

They pounded along abandoned farm roads in a former tree plantation that is now within the park in search of flowering chicksaw plum trees. They stopped to examine the spot where Moccasin Branch flows across a state gravel road. They traipsed through Hart's backyard at the fringe of the park to examine plants he has placed there to attract particular species.

At the end of the effort, a scribe for the Carolina Butterfly Society noted down species to be reported in the society's newsletter and, more importantly, to be entered into local and national databases. Those databases can reflect trends both in the health of natural resources and of the species that live in the habitats.

Hart said 93 butterfly species have been spotted in Harnett County. The highest number spotted on a single count at the park was 58.

Each year, volunteers in hundreds of com-



Scanning both the treetops and the ground yields sightings of butterflies in spring.

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BUTTERFLIES

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munities spend a few hours outdoors spotting butterflies as part of the North American Butterfly Association's annual census. Participants identify and note all of the butterflies they see within a specified area, each a circle with a 15-mile diameter.

The Butterfly Association collects and publishes the information as a guide for both amateur and professional lepidopterists.

The effort is similar to Christmas bird counts, organized by the National Audubon Society. And like the bird counts, the butterfly census often centers around state parks and other state and national properties where habitats are protected and where people have ready access to high-quality habitats.

Generally, the state parks are as much an attraction for amateur and professional naturalists as they are for common and rare species.

"I just like all little creatures," explained Michelle Laveris, who was participating in her first census. The attraction of spending a day outdoors in a worthwhile pursuit drew the Southern Pines retiree to Raven Rock on this Saturday morning.

There was also attraction in the color and flash of a new butterfly and even in the romantic names – red admirals, tiger swallowtails, spring azures, painted ladies, sleepy oranges and the great purple hairstreaks that, this year, made a somewhat rare appearance among the plum blossoms.

Each seasoned participant in the butterfly count seemed to have a particular "holy grail" species.

"You've got to wait an entire butterfly year to see a Leonard's skipper. They only have one brood in the fall," said Hart.

Harry LeGrand, a staff member of the N.C. Natural Heritage Program, stopped along the trail, thought for a moment and said, "It's always nice to see the first zebra swallowtail of the year."

For Bob Perkins, a co-leader of the count and a board member of the Carolina Butterfly Society, any day spent watching butterflies is a good day.

"I have to walk for my health," said the retired ecology professor. "I'm not one to put a Walkman in my ear, so watching butterflies and birds makes sense. I started when I was a kid. I've been chasing butterflies for 50 years."

Hart said that particular species of plants can be cultivated with the aim of attracting butterflies. Each butterfly species seeks out its preferred host plant to deposit eggs or gather nectar. For instance, the black swallowtail prefers fennel and dill and other plants in the same family. Bermuda grass appeals to the small southern skipperlings. Some plants will attract multiple species.

To learn more about butterfly counts and the subject in general, check the websites of the National Butterfly Society at www.nabu.org or the Carolina Butterfly Society at www.carolinabutterflysociety.org. North Carolina state parks regularly participate in national research on habitats and species. Ask staff at a local state park about opportunities to volunteer.



Above, an American lady nectars on a Chickasaw plum blossom. At left, Park Superintendent Paul Hart leads the group along old farm roadbeds at Raven Rock State Park.

DPR COMMISSIONS SEVEN RANGERS

Seven new state park rangers received commissions as law enforcement officers March 27. The rangers were sworn by Judge Ripley E. Rand in a special ceremony at William B. Umstead State Park.

Receiving a commission as Special Peace Officer at the end of 17-week basic law enforcement training is generally regarded as the last formal step before a ranger takes on full duties in a unit of the state parks system. During the training period prior to commissioning, a ranger is assimilated into the park and begins assuming duties in resource management and visitor service.

Judge Rand told the rangers and their park superintendents he is aware that state park rangers are among the most educated of law enforcement officers and have required duties that go far beyond those of other officers.

Rangers are required to have at least a two-year degree, and a majority come to the job with four-year university degrees. Beyond law enforcement training, all are trained in medical first response, search-and-rescue, wildfire suppression, natural resources management, interpretive skills and environmental education.

Rangers are also somewhat unique among law officers, Rand said, "because rather than going out into the community to do your job, the community will come to you."

Division Director Lewis Ledford told the group they have the special qualities it takes to wear the ranger's campaign hat. "You're able to look beyond the job and appreciate our mission of conservation and education."



Rangers take the oath as special peace officers in ceremony.

Susan Tillotson, chief of operations, said the rangers are now given a great deal of authority, and a great deal of responsibility but will assume a greater level of risk in their daily lives.

Welcoming them to the "state parks family," Tillotson said, "I want to remind you to enjoy being a state park ranger. There's no better job, in my opinion."

The rangers who received commissions are: Matthew James Amadon at Stone Mountain State Park; Christopher David Ammon at Eno River State Park; Kristen Lee Brigner at William B. Umstead

State Park; Crystal Michelle Dillard at New River State Park; William Gary Hartness at Weymouth Woods Sandhills Nature Preserve; Lora Sharon Manning at Pettigrew State Park; and, Matthew Henry Schnabel at South Mountains State Park.

Tillotson noted that among the law enforcement classes held across the state, Ammon was tops in his class in academics and physical fitness. Schnabel led his class in physical fitness, and Brigner set a record for a physical fitness test in hers.

"I know by now it's not unusual for our people to shine in this training," Tillotson said.



Judge Ripley E. Rand addresses the new park rangers.

HYDE TO LEAD CROWDER'S MOUNTAIN

Veteran ranger Larry Hyde has been promoted to superintendent of Crowders Mountain State Park in Gaston County. He succeeds Joe Sox, who retired late last year after 22 years in that position.

A superintendent is the chief of operations and administration at a state park or state recreation area with wide-ranging responsibilities for staffing, training, law enforcement, visitor services, natural resource protection and environmental education.

Hyde has been a Ranger III at Lake Norman State Park in Iredell County since February 2004. A native of Riverside, C.A., he earned a bachelor's degree in park administration and natural resource management in 1988 from California Polytechnic State University at Pomona.

After serving with the Mecklenburg County Parks and Recreation Department, Hyde joined the state parks system in 1992 as a Ranger II at Jordan



Lake State Recreation Area and moved to Morrow Mountain State Park in 1993.

Hyde is an emergency medical services, CPR and law enforcement instructor for the division, serves on the division's Interpretation and Education Council and is a certified environmental educator.

"With his broad range of experience, Larry has long been an asset to the state parks system and he will be a valuable asset as well at Crowders Mountain," said Lewis Ledford, director of the division, in announcing the promotion. "The popularity of that park is growing quickly, and its profile has increased as part of a larger corridor of protected lands in that region."

Crowders Mountain State Park opened to the public in 1974 and now encompasses 5,094 acres. The park recorded 339,572 visits in 2005.

"I'm excited about the opportunities offered at an expanding park like Crowders Mountain, including the chance to create a trail system with other agencies," Hyde said. "I've heard great things about the staff. I hope to be a positive influence for the park."

SMALL LAND PLOT BIG FOR CONSERVATION

A relatively small land acquisition at Lake Waccamaw State Park has the potential for a large impact on natural resource protection there and on park operations.

The purchase of three tracts totaling 23 acres at the park's northeast boundary adds 1,900 linear feet of lake shoreline to the park. That frontage includes the mouth of Big Creek, an important water source for the lake that flows from adjacent, state-owned gamelands.

Park superintendent Chris Helms said the property was formerly the site of a failed attempt at residential and marina development.

"Now, we're protecting that watershed with state-owned land on either side of Big Creek, which will help prevent runoff pollution," Helms said. "Also, some of the same endemic species in the lake are found farther up that creek."

Funding for the purchase was provided through the Parks and Recreation Trust Fund. The N.C. Parks and Recreation Authority last year set aside \$2.8 million for land acquisition projects that can help protect the lake and its watershed.

The former owner's development attempt resulted in some small ponds dotting the tracts. Although not an ecologically sound development practice, one of the ponds is connected to Big Creek and likely can be used to keep a state park

boat in the water at all times for use in case of emergencies, Helms said.

Currently, the park's boats must be kept on trailers and launched onto Lake Waccamaw from a nearby public boat ramp.

The property also includes a 1,200-square-foot house on the south side of Big Creek, which is being considered for use as a ranger's residence. The house is in disrepair and may have some termite damage, however.

The new park property also provides a connection to large tracts owned by International Paper Corp., specifically a portion known as the "lake compartment tract". The Nature Conservancy and the state parks system has been negotiating with the corporation for purchase of that property. It includes a portion of Friar Swamp, an important water resource that continues into the gamelands.

2006 State Agency Wellness Fair

*May 23 9 am. - 3 p.m.
James A. Graham Building
N.C. State Fairgrounds*

There'll be health screenings, medical tests, safety demonstrations and more than 100 vendors.

State and regional planners piece together maps of the piedmont region showing potential routes for the Mountains-To-Sea Trail along with local trails and park lands.



MOUNTAINS-TO-SEA

Continued from Page 3

effort to me is great because I don't want to exclude anything on that map...I see the primary route simply as the one that's most do-able."

The trail was envisioned in 1977 as a walking route from the Great Smoky Mountains to Nags Head, but the serpentine nature of the corridor has already extended the projected length from 700 to nearly 1,000 miles.

The trail concept got a head start in western counties. A corridor was established relatively quickly with the abun-

dance of public land along the Blue Ridge Parkway, in national forests and state parks.

In the east, momentum is building for a new corridor plan that makes use of flood-prone properties along the Neuse River basin. Local governments have been attracted to the trail's potential as an eco-tourism draw.

The central piedmont segment has always loomed as the most challenging with its clusters of local governments and its widely mixed land

uses. It was never considered a simple job to blaze a recreational trail through North Carolina's dense urban heartland.

"One issue is how to have this large project at the state level and at the same time, to get buy-in at the local level where things actually happen," Kron said.

The mid-state segment would stretch from Haw River State Park in Rockingham County east to Falls Lake State Recreation Area. The trail corridor is already firmly established through Eno River State Park and the recreation area. And, Wake and Johnston counties are aggressively working to extend the route eastward from that point.

Besides trail enthusiasts and officials of land trusts and the Friends of the Mountains-to-Sea Trail, the planning session drew representatives from Guilford, Alamance, Orange and Wake counties as well as people involved in planning or recreation in Greensboro, Graham, Burlington, Hillsborough, Durham and Chapel Hill.

Part of their task was to

CONTINUED ON PAGE 14



The first step for the group was to study detailed maps of the region from Guilford County to Durham and Wake counties.

PART F

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 1

the General Assembly's 2005 authorization for new parks at Hickory Nut Gorge and at Carver's Creek in Cumberland County.

Enthusiasm for the new western state park also came from Susie Hamrick Jones, executive director of The Foothills Conservancy. Speaking to the authority, Jones said that land trusts provide a way for local citizens and local governments to connect with state agencies and with funding sources such as the state's three conservation trust funds.

"What land trusts provide is a structure that gives citizens empowerment to act for places that are very special to them," she said. "The people who live in these areas know what's special."

Working relationships between nonprofit conservation agencies and state natural resource agencies, such as the state parks system, result in effective long-term management of ecologically sensitive areas such as Hickory Nut Gorge, she said.

Most of the March allocation for the park will go toward completing acquisition of the World's Edge tract on the south side of the gorge. The 1,568-acre tract was purchased from an estate in August for \$16 million by the Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy and The Nature Conservancy.

A 588-acre portion held by Carolina Mountain Land Conservancy has since become part of the park.

The rugged foothills land of World's Edge at the edge of the Piedmont offers rare plant and animal habitat and spectacular scenery and



On a tour of the area following their meeting, authority members take in the view from Eagle Rock, on a Hickory Nut Gorge tract that could become part of the state park.

shares a border with the private Chimney Rock Park.

Carol Tingley, chief of the parks system's natural resources section, told the authority that about 5,000 acres in the gorge ultimately may be available for the state park.

The \$1.2 million earmarked for Elk Knob is to be directed to tracts on The Peak, the highest mountain in Ashe County. The tracts are adjacent to 585 acres deeded to the state natural area last year with the help of The Nature Conservancy and will likely allow for public access to that area which is several miles north of Elk Knob's main access.

The state natural area will soon grow to more than 1,400 acres, and development of interim visitor facilities is under way.

The larger portion of 2005-06 trust fund revenues

earmarked for state park development was allocated in October. However, higher than anticipated revenues for the third and fourth quarters allowed the latest allocation for land acquisition and also \$3.6 million to be allocated for nine park capital projects. Those are:

- Maintenance dredging of Cow Channel at Hammocks Beach State Park, \$400,000.

- Additional funds for the paving of walkways on Bear Island at Hammocks Beach State Park, \$125,000.

- Additional funds for repair of facilities at the Summit Environmental Education Center at Haw River State Park, \$400,000.

- Replacement of electrical infrastructure at Morrow Mountain State Park, \$750,000.

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PART F

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-Building renovations at Morrow Mountain State Park, \$125,000.

-Additional funds for construction of a viewing platform and trail approach at Mount Mitchell State Park, \$200,000.

-Improvements at the Pinnacle area of Pilot Mountain State Park, \$500,000.

-Design for a visitor center and picnic area expansion at Raven Rock State Park, \$588,950.

-Additional funds for dam repair at Broughton Lake in South Mountains State Park, \$330,000.

Bruce Garner, chief of design and development for the state parks system, asked the authority to set aside \$232,576 to add to the system's construction reserve account because of a very volatile construction market.

Garner also said that design fees for many projects had jumped from 10 percent to as much as 15 percent of a project's total cost.

The authority's next task this fiscal year will be to consider grant requests from local governments for park projects. That process will begin with the authority's meeting in May at Wil-



Wendell Begley, second from left, is sworn in for another term on the authority by deputy town clerk Anita Taylor. Division Director Lewis Ledford is at left and Authority Chairman Jonathan Howes is at right.

liam B. Umstead State Park.

Thirty-five percent of the trust fund is set aside each year for such grants.

The authority expects to have about \$16.7 million available for local grants, and there have been 86 applications requesting \$27.4 million. Thirty-six of those applicants have requested the maximum grant amount of \$500,000.

MOUNTAINS-TO-SEA

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 12

determine criteria for selecting a trail corridor. Those included such things as local government support, landowner support, watershed protection, the existence of historical pathways, natural attractions and amenities.

They began to tackle some tough questions, including whether the Mountains-to-Sea Trail corridor should be the most direct route, the most enjoyable, the most comfortable, the most practical or a combination of those.

De Hart said, "Eight people have walked across the state on the trail (as it now exists) and none of us have the same thing to say about what we would change."

There continued to be much interest in making use of river corridors, and the Haw River has emerged as an attrac-

tive byway, because of its draw as a kayaking route, its connectivity to Jordan Lake and the American Tobacco Trail and the establishment of the Lower Haw State Natural Area just north of Jordan Lake.

Many of the local governments were interested in establishing loops or alternate routes that would touch on their developing systems of parks, greenways and water

access. Those include Greensboro's Lake Townsend and Hillsborough's Eno River project.

Another purpose of the planning session was to begin identifying those "areas of ambiguity" as Kron called them, where no public land is at hand and local support is uncertain. Those gaps can then be researched more thoroughly by planners in that area.

SALARIES

CONTINUED FROM PAGE 5

bers of the General Assembly."

In return for that confidence, he said, the state parks system must reaffirm its commitment to its mission, must forge ahead with its *New Parks for a New Century* initiative and continue to play a significant role in all the departmental initiatives.

"Our responsibilities

always include making sure all our facilities continue to provide a safe, healthy, inspiring and educational experience for all our visitors," he said.

Ledford added that, in the future, the division always needs to be attentive to salary improvements and questions of salary equity for all employees.

North Carolina State Parks

Monthly Attendance Report

February, 2006

PARK	FEBRUARY 2006	TOTAL YTD FEB. 2006	FEBRUARY 2005	TOTAL YTD FEB. 2005	% CHANGE (2005/2006)	
					FEB.	YTD
Carolina Beach	10,112	21,610	12,686	27,042	-20%	-20%
Cliffs of the Neuse	3,771	8,874	4,116	8,319	-8%	7%
Crowder's Mountain	21,186	45,540	22,203	47,499	-5%	-4%
Eno River	16,058	36,221	19,764	40,711	-19%	-11%
Falls Lake	14,618	33,262	15,259	28,276	-4%	18%
Fort Fisher	27,675	58,452	29,405	57,725	-6%	1%
Fort Macon	37,884	84,402	42,712	90,974	-11%	-7%
Goose Creek	5,364	12,645	7,930	14,817	-32%	-15%
Gorges	2,425	4,553	3,141	7,177	-23%	-37%
Hammocks Beach	4,941	10,092	5,709	11,019	-13%	-8%
Hanging Rock	11,906	28,564	12,482	27,828	-5%	3%
Jockey's Ridge	16,530	30,867	14,728	26,133	12%	18%
Jones Lake	2,834	5,580	4,092	6,816	-31%	-18%
Jordan Lake	16,459	33,149	21,997	42,291	-25%	-22%
Kerr Lake	33,340	70,772	42,148	76,504	-21%	-7%
Lake James	17,379	36,751	14,842	51,171	17%	-28%
Lake Norman	25,662	52,776	24,660	46,989	4%	12%
Lake Waccamaw	4,982	12,700	3,652	7,376	36%	72%
Lumber River	3,150	9,095	2,940	5,540	7%	64%
Medoc Mountain	1,724	4,148	1,688	3,844	2%	8%
Merchant's Millpond	8,488	18,496	10,412	20,496	-18%	-10%
Morrow Mountain	11,776	18,678	6,600	14,310	78%	31%
Mount Jefferson	2,512	6,444	3,360	7,640	-25%	-16%
Mount Mitchell	343	546	914	5,233	-62%	-90%
New River	4,616	9,458	4,897	8,943	-6%	6%
Occoneechee Mountain	2,996	6,391	3,374	6,363	-11%	0%
Pettigrew	3,483	7,254	4,284	6,944	-19%	4%
Pilot Mountain	14,669	31,373	18,658	35,624	-21%	-12%
Raven Rock	4,566	10,987	6,228	11,724	-27%	-6%
Singleary Lake	2,164	5,582	2,298	4,384	-6%	27%
South Mountains	8,972	19,282	11,748	21,728	-24%	-11%
Stone Mountain	12,408	30,160	13,928	30,872	-11%	-2%
Weymouth Woods	3,218	6,880	3,426	7,144	-6%	-4%
William B. Umstead	31,748	66,533	34,393	67,557	-8%	-2%
SYSTEMWIDE TOTAL	389,959	838,117	430,674	877,013	-9%	-4%

Mission

The mission of the North Carolina Division of Parks & Recreation is:

to protect North Carolina's natural diversity;

to provide and promote outdoor recreation opportunities throughout North Carolina;

and

to exemplify and encourage good stewardship of North Carolina's natural resources

for all citizens and visitors of North Carolina.

SAFETY ZONE

Always Take The Safe Route

✓Buckle your seatbelt every time you get into your vehicle, even on short trips.

✓Obey posted speed limits. Speeding is one of the leading causes of fatal accidents.

✓Give yourself enough distance to act and react in case another driver does the unexpected.

✓Focus on driving. Using a cell phone, adjusting the radio or reaching for a snack diverts your attention from the road.

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The Steward

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